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Earth Is Not Just a Human Playground

When the natural world responds to human activity

K. Lynn Follow 5 min read · Feb 4, 2021

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Photo by Greg Rosenke on Unsplash

My magenta water bottle sat on the large wooden windowsill. I reached for it to take a sip and quench my thirst. Suddenly, a large black raven flew into sight. It seemed as though my movement had summoned its presence. It landed on a short, snow-covered branch and became still — looking around. Sometimes, it appeared to look *at* me through the window.

I wondered, *"Did it see me? Did it at least sense my presence? Did it see my hand, my movement? Did I… disturb it?"*

Curiosity got the best of me. I reached out my hand again. This time with purpose. Instead of unconsciously reaching for my water bottle, I intentionally reached toward the windowpane. My goal was to place my hand on the window and see what the raven would do.

I did not even make it as far as the glass. I was about six inches away from touching the window when the raven took flight again.

"Oh my gosh. It did see me! I disturbed it. It was responding to me even though I am sitting inside and it was outside."

Have you ever had an experience like this in your life? You most likely have. Maybe a squirrel (hopefully) jumped out of the road as your car sped past in a rush to get to work? Or a deer got spooked by you on your hike up a mountain?

These seem like non-incidences. They don't seem that important, right? So why am I writing about it when there are more pressing issues to discuss?

Because this **is** important: **nature feels our human presence**. That raven felt, saw, or otherwise perceived me as I moved my hand towards the window — both times. That experience made it clear that I share the same space as that raven. And I don't mean my house. I mean we, the raven and I, share the same world: the same planet. Of course, the raven already knew that and so did I. (But did I really know that?)

Let me say this differently: I *affect* the natural world because I am a *part* of the natural world. And you are too! That is powerful.

I will say this one more way that hopefully removes me from the center of the equation: It is clear that (at least) observable parts of nature, such as animals, ***perceive*** us humans and respond accordingly.

So if you haven't had an a-ha moment by now, let me further explain.

Why is this so important to understand? Look at it this way. Humans tend to think that we live on this planet in some world "other" than the world that non-humans (like plants, birds, and other animals) live on, right? Part of this has developed out of how we have partitioned ourselves from nature.

Want to see animals? *You go to a zoo.*

Want to learn about trees and flowers? *You go to an arboretum.*

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Need food? *You go to the supermarket or a restaurant.*

Want to see animals in the water? *Go to an aquarium.*

Need some time to relax? *You go sit on a bench in the park or the forest.*

Can you recognize what's happening here? We have divided ourselves from the natural world so much that we may forget that we still exist in it!

You can see this human/nature division in the way we negatively react to parts of the natural world when they do show up in our lives: weeds in our yards, critters in our garbage, the rain ruining our hair, shoveling out the driveway after a snowstorm. It's almost as if we think, *"Oh my gosh, this is such a headache. Why is this happening? Why is this messing up my human experience… where did this come from?!"*

Well, it came from the same world you are living in — Earth. Remember?

You are a human who is a part of a natural world. Just because you spend much of your life in an artificially run tech world superimposed onto the natural world doesn't mean remnants of nature do not exist.

And we want them to remain — actually, we want them to flourish. We cannot live without air, water, and soil. Not only that but — and this is the mind-blowing part here — no one said that Earth was *only* for humans to experience life. I know what you might be thinking, and feel free to say it, but read this first.

If Earth were only for humans… why would it be constructed such that humans rely on other beings and other parts of nature to survive?

Why wouldn't we be able to do everything we wanted without environmental repercussions that come back around to threaten our survival?

Why would there be a climate crisis at all?

Why would we be concerned with pollution and deforestation?

Because, of course, Earth is not just a human playground. No matter how much we wish it could be or try to reconstruct it to be that way.

Yes, humans may have cut down forests, killed off a million species, polluted the waters — but guess what? Many parts of nature are still here. For instance, the birds, insects, squirrels, and other rodents have all learned to co-exist within our human-created landscape.

We may regard them as nuisances, and oftentimes they are, but it would behoove us to realize that they deserve to be here too. And that they need to be here because this planet wasn't designed to sustain humans alone. It was built on the interconnectedness of species and elements.

This world isn't just about me or you or the 7 billion other humans living in it and it's important to have moments to realize that. So the next time a bird or an insect or a butterfly crosses your path — think of what it means to share space with it and see how your perspective may change.

Thanks for reading! You may also enjoy reading this piece too.

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Written by K. Lynn

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Proud Earthling. Here to remind humans of their innate power as part of this planet. I believe in a better future together. Let the ideas speak for themselves.

Responses (3)

Write a response

What are your thoughts?

Jase S
Feb 5, 2021

I think that's a lovely sentiment. Living in a city (I'm assuming) we are very disconnected from the natural world. However it's a cold brutal world where no-one but us cares about anything beyond our own species. We are other, and that's a good... more

54 1 reply Reply

Mike Alexander
Feb 5, 2021

The more we distance ourselves from nature, the easier it becomes to abuse it. The reason I write nature stories (besides the mega bucks and fame) is that it is my way of encouraging people to bridge that gap. Stories may not be the perfect answer, but they are all I have to offer. TY for this piece.

57 1 reply Reply

Ann James
Feb 5, 2021

I have an a-ha moment every day except in summer when I hibernate from the heat, the snakes and smoky air. During the rest of the year, I walk in the nearby desert hills with my dogs where they case the ever elusive jackalopes.

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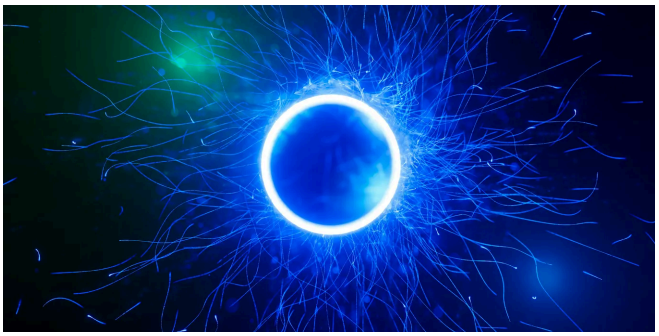

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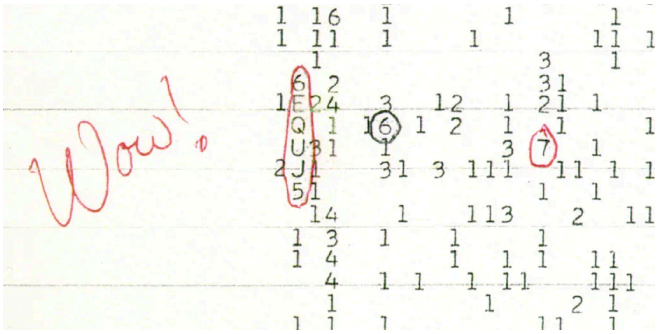

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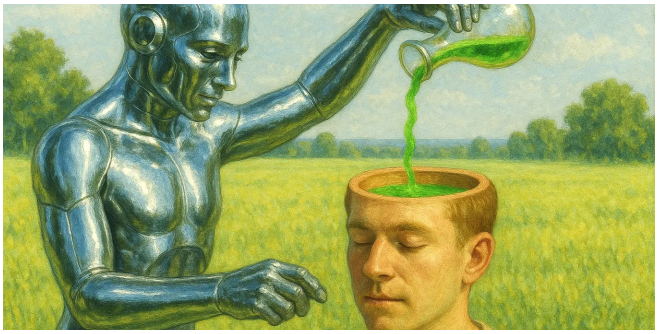

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